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The Indigenization of Christian Worship

In Mission Churches

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Introduction

The encounter between the Christian Church and the culture which surrounds it has sounded a keynote throughout the history of the Church. Sometimes this has been regarded as a curse. The Church has seen herself as an entity set against the world. At other times it has been regarded as an unavoidable situation. The Church has regarded herself as an inseparable part of culture--indeed as a divine entity which embraces cultures. But, in any case, the Church has had to come to terms with this interchange or point of contact.

Where the Church is already established, where it is already incorporated into a society and is accepted as a valid structure within that society, the problem is that of being in the world but not of it. And that is no simple problem. However, the problem is even more acute in a situation where the Church is not an acceptable part of society. For here the Church-society relationship can no longer be taken for granted. There is a sense of urgency in the situation because the encounter is often one of open hostility. The problem becomes even more complex when we consider the fact that this is not simply an interchange between the Church and a given culture; on the missionary level there is

also dialogue between two or more cultures.

With few exceptions contemporary missionaries feel that the Church should be indigenous to the areas in which it is evangelizing. The late nineteenth-century idea is abating that foreign cultures must be converted, that one culture must be imposed upon another before the Church can be established. Missionaries are more amenable to the idea that the Gospel is to be 'planted' among people and permitted to grow naturally.

The term 'indigenization' is a very complex one. There is an uncertain point at which the Church stops being indigenous and becomes something else. One aim of this paper is to focus on that point, and to try to define a little more clearly what properly is indigenization and what is not. Furthermore, it is a term which can be applied to every aspect of the Church's life. For example, it is possible to speak of an indigenous theological enterprise. That would involve a consideration of theological question from one's own cultural vantage point. Different cultural groups vary in their conception of time, space, history, etc. Different cultural groups possess various mythologies with which they try to define reality. All of this should be taken into consideration in the Christian theological enterprise.

The principle can also be applied to Church polity. It is felt in some circles that the local government of the Church should

be one in which the people feel at home. For example, if a particular society is based on a patriarchal system, then so should the local Church be so based. If the society is democratic, then the local Church should be democratic as well.

But these questions are both large within themselves. The scope of this paper will necessarily have to be narrower than the general question of indigenization within the Church. This discussion will be concerned rather with indigenous Christian worship. The thesis is that there are various ways of expressing one's religious feeling and piety. Furthermore, certain forms of expression are quite often peculiar to certain cultures. A given culture follows certain patterns in expressing its most basic feelings. Whenever possible, this should be taken into consideration.

To be different is one thing; to be foreign is quite another. There is no reason why a foreign culture should be imposed upon a group of people in order that they might be able to participate fully in Christian worship. Worship includes offering all that we have and all that we are. This offering takes many outward expressions--music, art, architecture, dance, and the like. With all of these forms we express thoughts and feelings which cannot fully be uttered in words. To say that one culture has a monopoly on these forms is somehow to misunderstand

the universal nature of the Church.

The format of this paper will be three-fold. The first chapter will include a discussion of the principle of indigenization itself and how it is to be applied to Christian worship. An attempt will be made to define the term more clearly. This will of necessity include a discussion of the relationship between the Church and society, or Christ and culture. The second chapter will be a discussion of the historical perspective; that is, how the Church, particularly up to the Constantinian era, has regarded the use of indigenous forms in Christian worship. Finally, an assessment will be made, showing a few areas where there is current interest in the problem and where work is being done. And to show that the problem is not a simple one, the difficulties of the claim for indigenous worship will be pointed out.

Chapter I

'Indigenization' is not an easy term to define. Most often we think of it as an active verb. We speak of 'making' the Church indigenous. We think of it as rather a cut-and-dried process which we may apply to a particular situation. Often we consider it to be a system of substitution. A foreign mission board moves into a country, studies that country's culture, and adapts its own forms to fit the culture as it sees it.

More properly it should be thought of as a passive thing. Indigenization is a process which is allowed, not one which is effected. The reason a particular Church is not indigenous is because it has been made something else. One does not make an African man African; one allows him to be so. When we speak of the indigenization of worship that does not mean that we 'make' a people's worship native. Worship is the natural reaction of a group of people to the Holy Spirit moving among them. Therefore, if people are given a degree of latitude within the established structure, they are going to respond in a way in which they feel at home.

If indigenization must be considered in the active sense, then perhaps a better synonym is that of Beyerhaus, who defines the term as 'identification.' "The Church becomes indigenous by

responding obediently to God's call in the contemporary and local circumstances and by complete and truly Christian identification with those to whom the Church is commanded to proclaim the Gospel."¹

This identification is two-way. First of all it is identification of the missionary with the people to whom he is proclaiming the Gospel. But as well it is the reverse. In that sense indigenization is an active process. But, properly speaking, indigenization as an active process is hardly accurate. In botany, for example, indigenous plants are those that grow naturally in a certain climate and terrain. Indigenous worship is similar to indigenous plants. If the right seeds are planted, shoots will sprout up without creating an artificial climate.

Perhaps one of the major questions should be: why should we be concerned about this at all? Why is it necessary for the Church to permit indigenous worship in areas where it is evangelizing? If the Church is established what difference do the means make?

In the first place, it is possible to make a practical case for it. A common defense for this position is that the new nationalism which has been so instrumental in the rise of young independent countries is dangerous. It is too easy to identify

¹Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever, The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 143.

the institutional Church with an aggressive or paternalistic mother country. A rejection of the Christian faith would necessarily follow from the rejection of the mother country.

It should be noted at this point that there is a difference between a 'national' Church and a 'nationalistic' Church. This distinction is made quite clearly by W. C. Lamott. The term 'national' developed as a euphemism for more undesirable terms. Originally the word 'native' was used, but Western colonialism made this sound odious to Oriental and African peoples. The term 'Younger Churches' also carries inferior connotations. But even the word 'national' creates confusion because it is easy to misconstrue the meaning and think of an established Church. Furthermore 'national' is used by political scientists to carry entirely different meanings.²

To simplify matters, 'national' can best be understood as a synonym for 'indigenous.' A 'nationalistic' Church could be understood as an organization which is seeking the local self-interests of a particular state or political faction. Properly speaking, it is not a 'church' at all, but only an organization which is used to help satisfy the higher motives of a state.

Perhaps this is a valid case for allowing indigenous worship;

²Willis Church Lamott, Revolution in Missions (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), pp. 98--99.

however it actually points to deeper, more significant factors. If the Faith is so easily cast aside in a situation such as this, one might wonder what really was established anyway. In the same respect, however, the indigenous Church does not have to be nationalistic in any sense. In fact, this should be avoided.

The real case depends upon one's theology of worship. If worship is considered to be merely external, a cheap substitute for oratory, then perhaps there is no case. One needs not worry whether or not worship is indigenous. But worship goes much deeper than that. Worship is communion between God and men; it is two-way. In the words of Massey Shepherd: "...worship is the making present here and now of the once-for-all, accomplished self-offering and triumph of God in his only beloved and perfectly obedient Son."³ Worship is not a good work which is effected from the genius of man. It is communication in which God speaks to man not only through the spoken word of the preacher, but also through sights, and sounds, and smells. It is the communication of and to the gathered community of the Presence of God; it is communication which takes many forms.

Furthermore, worship is the self-expression of the gathered community. It is man's way of expressing ideas which cannot be

³Frank Stephen Cellier (ed.), Liturgy is Mission (New York; Seabury Press, 1964), p.34.

intellectualized completely and put into words.

The ancient understanding of worship is that of sacrifice. Worship is the giving of the best that we have and all that we are. Again, this is not a good work. God accepts what we give Him because He is gracious, not because our gifts are worthy. Because of this Christian worship should arise out of our deepest life experience. It should not be at odds with the way in which we look at the universe. It should not be at odds with the art forms and other vehicles which we use to express our most profound thoughts on everything else. Religious expression should not be relegated to its own special realm. The truth of the Incarnation is that God is actively involved in all that we do.

It also stands to reason that there will be cultural differences among men in their religious self-expression. To be sure, there is remarkable unity among men as they stand in the Presence of God to say His Name. Sin is universal; we are all delivered by one act of Redemption. But it is also true that there are remarkable cultural differences among men. There are different ways of looking at the universe, different ways of thinking. Because of that different cultural groups will not express their inner-most feeling and piety in the same ways.

Of course, at this point one might well ask whether or not culture is a valid consideration. The Church has never reached an

agreement on what its attitude should be toward the world around itself. Since the time of the formulation of the New Testament, opinions have reached both extremes. There has always been an element in the Church which has said that culture is the epitome of evil, and the Church should live apart from it. There has always been an opposite element which has said that the individual is born into a culture, and he cannot escape it no matter what he tries to do to the contrary, and that in fact there are certain advantages to this situation.

This problem is spelled out very clearly in H. Richard Niebuhr's book Christ and Culture. Niebuhr shows that historically there have been five main approaches or themes to the problem-- five different ways of viewing the relationship between Christ and culture.

The first position is that of the radical Christian who sees a sharp separation between Christ and culture. Acceptance of Christ necessarily involves rejection of the world. The coming of Messiah was such an extreme pronouncement of judgment on the human enterprise that the Christian must have nothing to do with it. This, in fact, was the typical attitude of the earliest Christians. There is a clear rejection of the world in the Apocalypse, and the same theme can be picked up further in I John. In early Christianity it can be seen clearly in the writings of Tertullian who saw

the authority of Christ to be totally uncompromising. In the nineteenth century this position found expression in the writings of Leo Tolstoy, who regarded Jesus as the great lawgiver. Tolstoy's view often took the form of criticism of the state or the inadequacy of government in general.

The second view is the counterpart to radical Christianity; Niebuhr terms it 'cultural Christianity.' Proponents of this position say that Christ Himself is a product of culture. In a given time and a given place he was born into a culture. In every respect he was a first century man. Therefore, the aim of the Christian should always be to reconcile Christ with the current scientific and philosophical thought of the day. Christ was born into a culture Himself; that should be the starting point.

The first cultural Christians were the Gnostics, who had taken the Christ who had fulfilled the Messianic expectations of the Old Testament and translated him into the terms of Hellenistic metaphysics. In Niebuhr's words: "They sought to disentangle the gospel from its involvement with barbaric and outmoded Jewish notions about God and history; to raise Christianity from the level of belief to that of intelligent knowledge, and so to increase its attractiveness and its power."⁴ During the Middle Ages this

⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (Torchbook ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 86.

idea found its expression in Abélard, who in his moral theory of the Atonement, eradicated all 'seeming' conflict between Christ and Culture.

It was not, however, until the eighteenth century that the Christ of culture theme became dominant. There is not space to mention even the most well-known proponents of this view. In Niebuhr's words: "A thousand variations of the Christ-of-culture theme have been formulated by great and little thinkers in the Western world, by leaders of society and of the Church, by theologians and philosophers. It appears in rationalistic and romantic, in conservative and liberal versions; Lutherans, Calvinists, sectarians, and Roman Catholics produce their own forms."⁵

Between these two extreme positions there are three moderate ones. The first moderate position is that of Christ above culture. The starting point here is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Father Almighty Who created Heaven and Earth. Because of that fact Christ and the world cannot be simply opposed to each other. Neither can the 'world' be simply regarded as godless, for it cannot exist save as it is upheld by the creator. Since Christ has a unique relationship with the Creator, He too is above culture.

According to Niebuhr, Clement of Alexandria is the first major representative of the Christ above culture school. Clement

⁵Ibid., p. 91.

was interested in presenting the ethics of a sober, respectable life as the ethics of Christ. As Niebuhr notes, this is far removed from the interests of men who want to make discipleship easy. Clement stresses that being a good man in accordance with the standards of good culture is a pre-requisite for the Christian. This view is also consonant with the Thomist idea that the Christian (especially the monk) is to exist far above culture, yet the Church is the guardian of culture.

The second middle position is held by the dualist who sees Christ and culture in paradox. This position says that there is always a conflict between God and man. Man is always expressing the will to live without God. "All human action, all culture, is infected with godlessness which is the essence of sin."⁶ The dualist, like the radical Christian, renounces culture as sickness. But the difference is that the dualist sees no exit. He is trapped in culture, and God sustains him there. It is desirable that he transcend culture, but impossible.

Especially representative of this motif in the early period is St. Paul. The dualism of Paul, as Niebuhr sees it, is primarily the result of the gap which exists between God's righteousness and man's attempt at righteousness. In the mediator Jesus Christ all cultural institutions have been shown to be the sinful entities

⁶Ibid., p. 154.

which they are. Yet all cultural institutions, all activities and stations of men, are also subject to his redemptive work as well. Complementary to this are his two ethics of contradictory tendencies in life--the ethics of regeneration and eternal life and the ethics for the prevention of degeneration. "There is no virtue save the love that is in Christ, inextricably combined with faith and hope. From this all other excellence flows. The ethics of Christian culture, and of the culture in which Christians live, is as such without virtue; at its best it is the ethics of non-viciousness--though there are no neutral points in a life always subject to sin and to grace."⁷

The final position is that of the conversionist who sees Christ as the transformer of culture. The conversionist is quite realistic about the human condition. He accepts the reality of sin as readily as the dualist, yet he has a more hopeful attitude toward culture. This position shows a deep awareness of the Holy Spirit working in the Church. The conversionist believes that culture can be used by God, imperfect though it may be.

The conversionist motif, according to Niebuhr, is strongest in the Fourth Gospel, so far as the New Testament is concerned. This comes from the view that the world, though fallen, is created good. "He is concerned throughout his book with the transformation

⁷Ibid., p. 166.

by the spirit of Christ of the spirit that expresses itself in external acts of religion. He is concerned that each symbolic act should have the true source and the true direction toward its true object."⁸

This is an over-simplification of the five motifs as Niebuhr develops them, and no effort is made to give the strengths and weaknesses which he sees in them, but it can be used to show the relevance of indigenous worship among new Christians. Ultimately the Church's attitude toward culture is going to determine its activity in the mission field in the area of worship. If, on the one hand, Christ is seen against culture then all pagan forms of expression will have to be obliterated. The new convert will have to start with a clean slate as best he can. All of his old customs, his old ways of thinking will have to go. This is a formidable, if not impossible, task. But even beyond that, how does one explain the cultural context of the missionary himself? Is not even his own background essentially pagan in origin?

On the other hand, if the cultural Christianity position is supported then perhaps the easiest method would be to take indigenous pagan worship forms and substitute the name of Jesus for the names of the pagan gods at the appropriate places. The culture could fit the mold, even if the mold has to be stretched

⁸Ibid., p. 203.

out of shape a bit. The rationale behind this is that more converts can be won if the new Christian does not have to change his old ways of worship. Besides the fact that this ignores the demanding nature of the Faith, it is false from a pragmatic point of view. The new convert to Christianity most often accepts the radical change which is demanded of him. It repulses him to use old worship forms because they bring back to him associations of his old religion. It is one thing for a Western European or American to observe cultic practices which were taken from pagan Roman religion far removed from him. It is quite another thing for an African or Asian Christian to observe cultic practices which are still very much a part of his own culture.

The approach to the problem of indigenous Christian worship must lie somewhere in between the two extreme motifs of Christ and Culture. On the one hand, the missionary Church must be open to indigenous ways of religious expression as the working of the Holy Spirit within the Church--vehicles which can be transformed and used by God to tell new people that Jesus Christ is Lord. On the other hand, the Church must not be so eager that she sells out.

The motifs, as Niebuhr explains them, are not hard and fast 'schools' to which one must adhere. They are themes which run deep into Christian history. They are themes which appear together in the thought of many people. It is possible, for example, to

speak of part of our culture as being Christian, yet it would be an overstatement to say that we live in a Christian culture. We have far too many institutions which are contrary to the spirit of Christ for us to make such a claim. As Christians we find ourselves at times pitted against the major power structures of the world, political or otherwise. Yet as Christians we also have the hope that they can be transformed.

There are limits which must be observed. As Stephen Neill points out, a distinction needs to be made between 'difference' and 'foreignness.'⁹ The encounter with Jesus Christ always demands a difference. In Baptism the Christian renounces the "...devil... world...flesh...." There are many cultural activities which are contrary to the purposes of God as they are revealed in Christ. Regardless of one's ethical view the Christian is required to act within a Christian context. Any Christian convert must be prepared to act on different bases than he did formerly.

Christian discipleship is positive as well as negative. It involves giving up old ways, but it also involves following a new, entirely different course. The missionary Church must always keep this in mind. The Faith is not as nebulous as we sometimes present it. It has a creedal formulation, a basis of Holy

⁹Stephen Neill, The Unfinished Task (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), p. 110.

Scriptures, and it functions through the instrument of an Apostolic Church. Acceptance of that always necessarily involves one's following a new course. That is as true for the Western convert as it is for the African or Asian.

This is one limit which must be regarded in consideration of indigenous worship. When indigenous worship stops short of the basic requirements of the Faith, then perhaps we are speaking of syncretism. Syncretism occurs when, on the one hand, a group of people adhere to more than one religion. An example of this is the native population of Haiti where it is said that ninety per cent of the people adhere to Christianity (predominantly Roman Catholic) and one hundred per cent adhere to vaudun. On the other hand, syncretism can mean an artificial picking and choosing of the best elements from many religions to come up with a completely different one.

Eugene Nida makes rather a clear distinction between indigenization and syncretism. He writes: "Indigenization consists essentially in the full employment of local indigenous forms of communication, methods of transmission, and communicators, as these means can be prepared and trained. Syncretism, on the other hand, involves an accommodation of content, a synthesis of beliefs, and an amalgamation of world views, in such a way as to provide some common basis for constructing a 'new system' or a 'new approach.'"¹⁰

¹⁰ Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), p. 185.

This is a good rule to follow where the liturgy is concerned. The basic forms of the liturgy must be expected to stand as they are. The Church--Eastern and Western--administers Baptism with water and in the three-fold Name of the Trinity. It is difficult to imagine changing that formula to comply with a similar rite in a pagan religion. In the same respect there is a fairly uniform action which must be followed in the celebration of the Eucharist.

In accordance with Dom Gregory Dix's thesis, there is a 'shape' to the liturgy which has remained from Apostolic times. Whether one artificially divides it into a four-fold shape as he has done, or whether one chooses to divide it some other way, there is an essential shape which should not be violated. Yet this basic shape to the liturgy has been expressed in many different ways. In Dix's words:

Every rite which goes back beyond the sixteenth century is to a large extent the product not so much of deliberate composition as of the continual doing of the Eucharistic action by many generations in the midst of the varying pressures of history and human life as it is lived. The immense local variety of rites represents the immense variety of cultures, races and local circumstances in which the one Body of Christ has incarnated itself by 'doing this' in the course of two thousand years. During that time several great civilisations and empires and innumerable lesser social groups have risen and flourished and passed away. Many of them have left a mark in their time on the local liturgy as it survived them, in the wording of a few prayers or in some gestures and customs, in the cut of a vestment

or some furnishing of the sanctuary. But under all this superficial variety there is a single fixed pattern common to all the old Churches of the East and West, which was not everywhere wholly destroyed among the Churches of the Reformation.¹¹

There are many forms and rites which have been used by the Church and which are supra-cultural, and they should be expected to stand as they are. It is more in the area of ceremonial that indigenization becomes a factor.¹² A Mass set to the music of bongo drums is just as valid as one set to the music of a pipe organ. It is not essential that the whole Church sing German chorales and kneel for the Eucharistic canon. In fact, the early Christians stood to pray. If a native people are accustomed to expressing their inner-most religious feelings by dancing, then perhaps a place should be made for that in the worship setting.

It is unfortunate that so much of the missionary work of the Church has been carried on by extreme groups who are completely unsympathetic to foreign cultures. It is said that ninety per cent of the Churches in Nigeria, for example, are maintained by extreme evangelical groups who "have no cross on the table and

¹¹Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1943), p. 743.

¹²Although rite and ceremony are occasionally used synonymously, a distinction between the terms will be observed in this paper. Rite will refer to the text of a liturgy, and ceremonial will refer to its performance.

no table that can be called holy."¹³

Western Christians, especially those of the Protestant and Reformed traditions, have almost completely intellectualized Christianity. The vehicle of communication has become almost entirely the spoken and written word and man's rational ability to perceive it. The Western Church must come to realize that only a minority of the people in the world grasp Christianity or any other truths through abstract concepts. And it is not a matter of the level of education. Most of the people in the world simply have a more tangible way of perceiving reality.

There is so much in Christianity which is not really foreign to other cultures. For example, Christianity is rich with symbolism, for which Eastern Christians probably have a greater appreciation than Western Christians. Symbolism in the West has too often been equated with idle superstition. The reformed Christians took over Mediaeval buildings and ripped out all possible symbols. What was left was a bare meeting room with a pulpit in the center. Unfortunately, this same attitude has been assumed by many missionaries who go out to people who depend upon symbols to grasp the truth.

Symbolism is not simply a useful tool for the missionary

¹³Edmond Ilagu, "The Problem of Indigenization in Nigeria," International Review of Missions, XLIX (April, 1960), p. 178.

to use at his own discretion. There is a real danger in the ignorance of a people's symbolic understanding. Eugene Nida tells of a group of missionaries who thought it might be effective to use loudspeakers to reach more people in a village of American Indians. So they installed a public address system in the local mission church and broadcast the worship services so that the whole village could hear. However, this offended the Indians very much, for they regarded religion as a commodity of high value and something intensely personal. The use of loudspeakers cheapened it.¹⁴ The missionary can easily alienate great numbers of people just by being ignorant of their culture.

But more than this, he will not be heard at all if he insists upon stating the content of the Faith in abstract terms. When all is said and done, the task of the missionary is primarily to relate a story. God draws people near to Himself; the task of the missionary is to plant the seed. But it is crucial how he decides to do that. The story must be grasped; the Church, therefore, must be prepared to use all of her resources to tell it.

The task at hand is not to gather all the cultures of the world together and to choose various elements which might be useful in communicating the Christian message. On the one hand, the task is to use the resources which are already inherent in

¹⁴Nida, Message and Mission, p. 172.

Christianity and which are not really peculiar to any particular culture. There is a wealth of symbolism already present. The liturgical calendar, for example, in its ever-recurring cycle speaks to the Easterner who sees life itself as an ever-recurring cycle. And the very purpose of the calendar is to teach. The whole Sacramental life of the Church is a medium which speaks to the person who thinks in symbolic terms. The Eucharist is one place in the Church where the Presence of Christ does not have to be perceived in abstract terms. In an objective, concrete way He is truly Present. The Easterner is probably much more willing to accept that reality than the Westerner because he will not be so quick to brand it as idle superstition.

Worship also has traditionally served as a teaching function. Since the earliest Church instruction has been conducted within the context of corporate worship when the faithful gathered to celebrate the Holy Meal. This same principle should apply in the mission Churches. There is a clear danger to guard against here. The Christian liturgy is not an instrument of propaganda. By its very nature it is an act of the faithful. But it does provide nurture for the faithful as they grow in their new life together.

The Church, however, should not be concerned with indigenous worship as a matter of efficiency or expediency. Too often we have thought in terms of 'winning more souls' by improving our methods.

In too many instances the American assembly-line principle has been applied to the proclamation of the Christian Gospel. The fact is that we are not going to usher in the Kingdom of God no matter how hard we work.

For too long the missionary Church has been paternalistic in its activity. It has taken upon itself a task which belongs somewhere else. In an ambiguous sort of way we have applied the principle that Christ is apart from certain cultures, though not from our own. We have tried to sell an idea where actually the Christian Gospel is not a commodity to be sold. Worship is a corporate act in which the various individuals present give themselves as an offering to God. We cannot give the image of ourselves which someone else holds.

In the final analysis indigenous worship must be spontaneous and original. It cannot be prescribed by the mother Church to the mission Churches which it is sponsoring. It must spring from the people themselves. Perhaps it will mean waiting for native genius to arise, but if that is the case then the Church must wait.

Chapter II

The purpose of the first chapter was to show that there is a need to be aware of the indigenous principle which is operative in the worship of the Church, and to see how it can be put to work in missionary activity. The discussion of this chapter will be concerned to show the historical perspective of that principle. This is to assume that it is highly desirable for any such activity to be based on historical precedent, or tradition.

The application of the indigenous principle to worship is not a 'technique' which the missionary Church has stumbled across in recent years. The mistake is often made of focusing on the missionary activity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, losing eighteen centuries of Church history in the dark background. We look through the eyes of 'enlightened' twentieth century men--the issues sharpened into focus by a burning, if sometimes inaccurate, sense of social justice. We see a paternalistic nineteenth century Church imposing Western European social standards onto the people of the dark corners of the world who possess a mystical form of primaeval innocence. In reaction to that idea is a 'crusade' which is meant to free these people from the bonds into which they have been placed by another culture.

It is natural in social causes to see issues in black and

white, and it is natural to take those issues out of their historical contexts. One can see this working in nineteenth and twentieth century reform movements of social and racial equality. Everything acquires moral overtones. An action or institution is either right or wrong. There is an overpowering sense of immediacy. Action is demanded now.

Perhaps it stretches the point a bit to compare the argument for indigenization to a social reform movement. A desire for social reform requires ferment, and if the truth were known most people within the Church could probably care less one way or the other about indigenization. Most people are completely removed from the problem. Nevertheless, there is this self-righteous tendency to look at the sins of the fathers and to judge them. Nineteenth century missionaries are often seen only as stern father figures who courageously took on the 'white man's burden,' and even disciplined the natives by flogging them whenever necessary. There is a great deal of truth to that image, but one only needs to take a glimpse at the missionary journals of a century ago to see the obstacles which these men had to hurdle. Their task was not easy. The problem was not all that simple.

Evangelism is not a social cause, however. Conviction is not to be confused with emotionalism or enthusiasm. For that reason indigenization is not simply to be regarded as a cut-

and-dried method which can be applied at will. Indigenization is a principle which has been operative in the Church since its very beginning. Since the day in Jerusalem when the Christians gathered to celebrate the feast of Pentecost people have heard the Gospel in their own tongue. In part this is because the Church has been aware of her missionary responsibility enough to know that a people must be approached on their own terms. But as well the Holy Spirit has been gracious to allow people to hear the Gospel. That is to say, the Church has become 'at home' in many diverse cultures not only because her missionaries have been aware of the principle of indigenization, but also because the Holy Spirit has been present in the Church. By looking at Christian worship at several points of its development through the centuries we can see this point time and again.

There is a danger in sketching the course of the development of Christian worship. There is always the temptation to simplify the problem and look at it in one of two ways. The first temptation is to take a nucleus of Jewish synagogue worship and begin rolling it through history. Like a giant snowball it gathers to itself elements from many diverse cultures which came into the Church as the Gospel was spread. The other temptation is to regard early Christian worship as a unique phenomenon, and to chart the development as a continuing reaction against all cultures which it

encountered. The truth lies somewhere in between these two extremes. We can see that at times the Church has been extremely conservative concerning the addition of elements of worship from other cultures. At other times it has readily adapted new forms of worship.

Christian worship is part of the Church's Resurrection experience; therefore there are unique elements. But we must also see it as a legacy from the early Jewish-Christians' background. The source most often cited as an indication of the Jewish nature of early Christian worship is the Acts of the Apostles. There we are told that the followers of the 'Way' gathered daily in the Temple, devoted themselves to the Apostles' teachings, prayed, and broke bread together. There is, in fact, no reason to think other than that the Jewish-Christians would continue to gather in the Temple. Their Lord, too, had worshipped there; he had even called it his Father's house when he threw out the money-changers and overturned their tables.

As Father Jungmann points out, there are many elements of Temple worship which remain a part of the Church's worship--even where the Church has been transplanted to non-Jewish cultures. Some of these institutions are the use of Jewish Scriptures, the use of the Psalter as a hymnal, and the partial use of the Jewish calendar with the observance of certain feast days (such

as Pentecost) which were of special significance to the Christians. Furthermore, the week remained divided into seven days with the days indicated by numerical order. The Christian celebration of the Eucharist shows influence from the Sabbath meal which began and ended the same way as the Paschal meal. There was responsive singing of the Psalms. Prayers were begun with an invitation to pray and concluded with a reference to God's eternity. The Amens and Alleluias were retained in their Hebrew forms. Furthermore, the monastic offices have their roots in the Three Hours of prayer of the devout Jews. And the liturgy of the Church began with readings from the Scriptures, which is reminiscent of Synagogue worship.¹

It is sometimes assumed, especially among more protestant-minded Christians that early Christian worship consisted of the starkest simplicity, and that it was gradually corrupted with excessive ceremony down through the centuries. Yet this is difficult to imagine if we take seriously the ceremonial of Jewish Temple worship. In describing the Temple liturgy Evelyn Underhill writes:

The Temple liturgy, centred upon the public sacrifices and the great festivals of the Jewish year, was at its best a solemn and dramatic act of worship, a sacramental expression of great religious realities, in which sense

¹Joseph A. Jungmann, S. J., Public Worship, trans. Clifford Howell, S. J. (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1957) pp. 12--13.

and spirit co-operated and all present took their part. Each morning, at daybreak, incense was offered; the perfect symbol of selfless and confident prayer. Then an unblemished lamb was sacrificed, and after it the meal offering--a cake of flour and oil--whilst psalms were sung by the choir, prayers were recited and the people made their own supplications. The offerings were followed by a service of prayer, which included the recital of the Shema and the Commandments; and a service of praise, with the libation of wine, 'the blood of the grape poured at the foot of the altar' and the singing of the psalms.... On the Sabbath the sacrifices were doubled; and on great festivals the whole service with the opening processions of the people 'going up to the house of the Lord' to the song of the gradual psalms and elaborate ritual movements of the Sons of Aaron 'as a garland around about' the high priest, was conducted with a ceremony of splendour, a devotional fervour, and a dramatic alternation of the extremes of abasement and joy--of 'ringing cries' and speechless prostration--offering full employment to body as well as soul, voice as well as heart.²

This elaborate ceremony is alluded to in the fifteenth chapter of Ecclesiasticus in the account of the high priest Simon's (son of Onias) fortification of the Temple. In addition, we know that even Jewish meals in the home were of religious significance and consequently were conducted with elaborate ceremony. It is difficult to imagine Christian worship growing up in this ceremonial atmosphere without in some way being affected by it. Surely stark devotional worship would have been as 'foreign' to a Jewish-Christian as Temple worship would have been to a New England Puritan.

²Evelyn Underhill, Worship (Torchbook ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1936), pp. 206--7.

The point of this discussion is that even in its formative period Christian worship cannot be understood as being apart from a certain culture. At its very source it was indigenous to a certain group of people. Although we can understand its uniqueness as a gift of the Spirit, we still cannot divorce it from Jewish culture. The worship of the early Christians was in response to their Resurrection experience; yet they were Jews, and, therefore, they worshipped as Jews.

Some scholars, however, are very conservative regarding the relationship between Christian liturgy and Temple worship. One such position is expressed by Maurice Goguel.³ He is willing to admit the influence of the Jewish liturgy on Palestinian Christianity, though there is no positive proof of this influence. The main problem concerns Greek Christianity. The arguments commonly made for the case here are that Paul's missionary preaching began in the synagogues, and that the Eucharistic prayers of the Didache are only an adaptation of the Jewish prayers before meals. Goguel's objection is that the Christians were very quickly driven out of the synagogues by the Jews. Furthermore, there would have been no place in the synagogue worship where the Christian could make the necessary appeals to the invocation and adoration of Christ or

³Maurice Goguel, The Primitive Church, trans. H. C. Snape (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1947), pp. 260--61.

where he could have administered Baptism or the Eucharist. Also we have no source of early Christian worship which shows one necessary element of synagogue worship, namely the reading of the Law and the Prophets.

Goguel is not arguing against the influence of Jewish worship on the Christian cultus. He is only saying that one cannot say whether or not this was of a general character, and also in what circumstances and at what time it happened. According to Goguel, the crucial factor is not the gathering of the Christians in the Acts of the Apostles, but rather it is the break which came between Christianity and Judaism in 70 A. D. He claims that this promoted the influence of the Jewish liturgy on Christian worship. The Christian Church claimed to be the sole inheritor of Judaism; therefore a systematic attempt was made to establish continuity between Christian and Jewish worship. "At the same time the Church found it necessary to give its worship a transcendent character and a divine origin, and there sprang up the idea that the ritual legislation of the Old Testament applied to it, and that the Eucharist was the true sacrifice. These ideas caused Christian worship to be explicitly influenced by the Jewish liturgy, but this was not a phenomenon which occurred right at the beginning of the creation of Christian forms of worship."⁴ He concludes that there definitely

⁴Ibid., pp. 261--62.

was a continuity between Palestinian and Greek cultus, mainly on the basis that the Eucharist developed entirely from a Palestinian tradition and that Greek worshippers used the Aramaic formulae of acclamation, invocation, and confession of faith (Amen, Abba, maran Atha).

In spite of all his attempts to do otherwise, even Goguel overgeneralizes. He makes the common mistake of looking at a Palestinian Church on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and a Hellenistic Church on the peninsula of Greece, when in fact we know that at this time there was no monolithic culture in Palestine. This was the time of Roman occupation, and Hellenistic influence had spread there centuries before. Hellenism must have had no small influence even on Jewish worship.

We would do well to regard the uniqueness of early Christian worship. In many ways it was neither Jewish nor pagan. The writers of the New Testament show a healthy reaction against non-Christian forms of worship. There is a dynamic and spiritual quality to Christian worship which is new. In the first place, there is a new emphasis on prayer. The evangelists record many times where Jesus leaves the crowds and goes off by himself to pray. During the Passion he encourages his disciples to pray; he says nothing about their offering sacrifices, nor do we have any indication that he himself did. In the Acts of the Apostles we also have a heavy

stress on prayer.

There are further indications of a reaction against a ceremonial worship which had become formalized and stilted. One is reminded of Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman at the well, where she inquired of him where men ought to worship. He responded: "The hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him."⁵

Also brought to mind are those many passages in the Gospels where Jesus clashes with the Scribes and Pharisees over the proper observance of the Sabbath. Does this not also correspond to the concerns expressed in the Prophets and the Psalter against formalized worship? "Rend your hearts and not your garments." (Joel 2. 13) "Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire; but thou hast given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required." (Psalm 40. 6) "For thou has no delight in sacrifices; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm 51. 16--17)⁶

The worship of the primitive Church, especially as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is far from formalized. We

⁵John 4. 23.

⁶Cf. also: Hosea 6. 6; 8. 18; 9. 4; Isaiah 1. 11, 13, et. al.

are told of a spontaneous and spirit-filled worship which in itself is a witness to the Living Christ's Presence in His community. This is a new phenomenon, one which in many ways goes beyond all national or cultural boundaries. Furthermore, it was expressing a new and completed act of God in history. Jewish worship very simply was part of the old dispensation.

Writing of this in the nineteenth century, de Pressensé states:

(Christian worship) could not maintain the separative character of Judaism without belying itself. As the religion which proclaims a redemption no longer promised and typified, but accomplished, it cannot perpetuate institutions the object of which was to awaken and sustain in man the sense of his condemnation and separation from God. The system which brought into prominence the pollution of man's existence, by setting apart a holy place for worship, holy days, and a holy caste, must needs disappear when the Cross had wrought a full redemption for the race, and the great reconciliation was no longer a promise but a fact.... As the expression of faith in a finished redemption, (Christian worship) manifests this faith by word, and by very simple rites which bring home to the heart the spiritual reality. Its basis is teaching, its tapstone is prayer, which is a spiritual sacrifice no less than an act of worship, and which is offered sometimes in singing, sometimes in supplication. Prayer is the soul of the sacrament, which gives visible form and consecration to the spiritual fact, and makes it to the worshipper intensely real.⁷

The fact that early Christian worship was spiritual and spontaneous is very important to the question of indigenization.

⁷E. de Pressensé, Christian Life and Practice in the Early Church, trans. Annie Harwood-Holmden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1877), pp. 296--97.

We can see that it was not enough that the early Church take over Jewish forms. It was not enough that the early Christians were allowed to use familiar forms. The same holds true for young Churches in the present day. Lying behind all efforts to adapt local forms to the liturgy must be an open and self-conscious awareness of the Holy Spirit working among the congregation of the faithful. If all attention is given to the forms of worship as such, the ceremonial, with little regard for the Spirit lying behind them, the effect is most likely to be a dead cultus. Ceremonial cannot sustain itself; eventually it degenerates into a stilted repetition of meaningless words and phrases.

The history of Christian worship in the period between the Apostolic Church and the Edict of Milan in 313 might be characterized as a period of relative conservatism so far as adapting indigenous worship forms is concerned. During this period the Christian fellowship is moving further away from Palestine all the time, spreading over a greater part of the Graeco-Roman world. During this period the main objective of the Church is not to try to adapt itself to new cultures, but rather to preserve itself against destructive forces which confronted it. On the one hand, there are these elements such as Gnosticism and the mystery religions which threatened to adulterate the faith. On the other hand, there are the religious persecutions which threatened to

destroy the very life of the Church.

There is not a great abundance of information about the worship of the Church at this period. In fact, at the close of the Apostolic period there is a complete gap. But the primary sources which we have are the Church Orders of the second and third centuries. The Church Orders were manuals of instruction for the administration of the Sacraments and for the ordering of the everyday lives of Christians.

The earliest of these 'Orders' is assumed to be the Didache. The author and date are unknown, but it is supposed to be Syrian in origin. There are included a few sketchy instructions on Baptism, the Eucharist, prayer, and fasting. It was followed in the third century by the Apostolic Church Order, which was probably Egyptian in origin. Next comes the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, formerly known as the Egyptian Church Order, and it comes out of the third century.

These Orders were revised and enlarged and resulted in the writing of the Didascalia in Syria, and the Apostolic Constitutions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to set down a straight chronological order for the production of these manuals. They are for the most part pseudonymous, and their origin is rather uncertain. They developed gradually with periodic additions and revisions.

Their origin and development, however, is not so important

as their existence. The Church Orders are naturally more concerned with rite than with ceremony, but the fact that they were written down at all shows that there was a good deal of anxiety in the Church about the adulteration of worship by pagan elements. It seems fairly logical that the Church would not be overly concerned about adapting indigenous forms to her worship.

It is easy enough to see why Christian worship would remain conservative during this period. The world into which the Faith was spreading was highly complex, to say the least. In the first place, there were many polytheistic cults in the Empire which were supported by the state for the general welfare of the Empire. In a Machiavellian fashion the Roman government allowed worship to local gods in order to maintain peace and order. Undoubtedly pagan worship had degenerated through the centuries, but there was still a large popular observance of rites, accompanied by elaborate pomp and ceremony. The greatest appeal was probably the entertainment they provided. In addition to this, emperor worship had also grown up as the Greek and Roman Empires had spread. There were practical reasons behind this as well.

In addition, esoteric mystery religions had spread from the East. Cults grew up which were centered around Dionysus, Orpheus, Osiris, and more especially around Mithras. These cults centered around death and rebirth, contained elements of

regeneration or reincarnation, and helped to satisfy a deeply-felt need for immortality. Efforts have been made at various times to show an influence of these mystery cults on Christian worship. The usual argument centers around the Mithras cult which practiced baptism and observed a sacramental meal.

It is improbable, however, that there was any great influence. The early Christian writers do not appear to have been positively concerned about them; in fact, there is even a negative reaction against them. Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century, in discussing the words of institution, writes: "This very thing the evil demons imitated in the mysteries of Mithras and commanded to be done. For as you know, or can discover, bread and a cup of water are set out in the rites of initiation with the repetition of certain words."⁸ The mysteries were highly syncretic, and it is just as probable that they took over many parts of the Christian worship rites.

The situation during the second century was an eclectic one. There were many cultures mixing and changing, the syncretism of many world-views which did not necessarily agree with one another. Many diverse people were speaking a common language which rang familiar sounds not only with the Old Testament, but also with the astrological terminology of the mystery religions, and the

⁸Justin, Apology I. lxvi.

philosophical terminology of declining Hellenistic paganism. It is not a simple matter of saying that Christianity insulated itself against pagan forces. Undoubtedly the pagans found some familiarity with the Faith, otherwise there would not have been such an ardent following. Yet there seemed to be a very clear point at which pagan thought went beyond the pale, and the Church pronounced it to be heretical.

The greatest factor in the conservative nature of early Christian worship, however, was persecution from the outside. Any group of people who preach an uncompromising Gospel always expose themselves to attack, and it was no less so with the Christians. The earliest indication we have of the persecution of Christians was the stoning of St. Stephen by the Jews. But after the split between Christianity and Judaism became more pronounced persecution from the Jews lessened, and the attack was taken up by the pagans.

There were many reasons for the persecutions. As Wand points out, many of the causes were social ones. The pagans could not understand the exclusiveness of Christianity. There was dissention in marriages when one member of the family was converted and the other members were not. The trade of many merchants suffered. There was suspicion about the 'clandestine' meetings of the Christians.⁹ This antagonism was to be expected. Many of the

⁹J. W. C. Wand, A History of the Early Church to A. D. 500 (Strand: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1937), p. 16.

causes were historical, though it is hardly central to this discussion to examine them. In any case, this period of Church history closes in 313 with the issue of Constantine's Edict of Milan, which was the first step in making Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire.

The persecutions had a profound effect on the Church. Unknowingly the Roman Emperors gave the Church even more strength by the stringent persecutions. The over-all effect was to eliminate the half-hearted Christians and preserve a hard core faithful group. Undoubtedly this had an effect on the spirit of worship, but there were also more objective results as well. As Dix points out, we would do well not to be taken in by the image of Christians worshipping in the squalid catacombs of Rome. In the first place, there simply was not enough room in the catacombs for a group of people to gather for corporate worship. In the second place, we have sources which show that during the persecutions there were many wealthy Christians who used their homes as a meeting place.

To be sure, there was a matter-of-factness about the celebration of the liturgy. The people gathered in such a way as to attract as little attention as possible; they performed the liturgy and then disbanded quietly. But we could easily exaggerate the starkness or simplicity of such services. After all, they did gather in elegant places. In 303 a Christian place of worship was

seized in Algeria, and an official report was drawn up of the items seized. This report shows rather an extensive collection of silver bowls, chalices, lamps, and candlesticks, along with many articles of clothing.¹⁰ Thus we see a fairly elaborate Christian worship in the midst of a hostile pagan civilization.

During this period, then, we can see that the Church was very conservative about adapting the pagan forms which surrounded their own worship. Yet the forms of worship were in part affected by the local circumstances (i.e. the Church had to adapt her worship in the face of the persecutions); perhaps in that sense we could call the worship of the Church 'indigenous.'

The critical point in the development of Christian worship comes in 313 with the Edict of Milan. We look at this date with a sigh of relief because the persecutions are ended, but peace did not come without a price.

With Constantine's blessing upon the Church great numbers came into her folds. The Faith became an easy course to follow, and great numbers were attracted to it. If one can see great 'watersheds' in history, this is one. Before this time the liturgy evolved from its own intrinsic principles. After this time it reacted to the influences of pagan antiquity.¹¹

¹⁰Dix, Shape of the Liturgy, pp. 24-5.

¹¹Josef A. Jungmann, S. J., The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great (Notre Dame, Ind.: U. of Ind. Press, 1959), p. 122.

Before this time the Church was fighting neither to preserve an old culture, not to acquire a new one. It was fighting simply because a spirit was compelling it to preserve itself. This was to be seen no less in the worship of the Church than it was to be seen in the writings of the Apologists, for example. Now we have a radical adjustment to culture. It is difficult to overestimate the degree to which pagan Roman culture influenced Christian worship during this period.

The Christians adapted the basilica as a meeting-place. Instrumental music was adapted from the practice of having music at pagan feasts. The Greek language of the liturgy was given up for Latin.¹² Furthermore, when the Greek prayers were translated the long prosaic style was given up for the shortness and conciseness which was characteristic of Latin legal language.

Many manual actions came into the Christian liturgy from the pagan culture. These included greeting with a kiss, the accompaniment of a bishop by a deacon and sub-deacon, and the use of lights and incense. Even elements were taken over from the pagan religions. Art forms were adapted. The eastward position of prayer was taken along with pagan symbols such as the rising sun, the use of milk and honey in Baptism, the marriage wreath, etc.¹³

¹²Perhaps this is more an indication of the greater number of Roman Christians. We have no reason to think that the Latin-speaking Christians had originally insisted upon worshipping in Greek.

¹³An excellent and detailed summary of the impact of

There must be a distinction made here between borrowings from the secular culture and borrowings from the pagan cults. Most of the practices which the Christians took over were simple court customs--customs taken from everyday life. But the adoption of religious practices deserves special attention. Certain pagan customs, such as facing the east to pray, were adopted, but they were given Christian significance. Christ, for example, came to be regarded as the Rising Sun, and people faced the east in expectation of his return.

More significant, however, was the influence of paganism on the Christian calendar. We can see many attempts to 'baptize' pagan festivals by making them coincide with Christian celebrations. April 25, the feast of St. Mark, was also observed as litania major in pre-Christian Rome. On that day there was a procession through the fields in honor of the goddess Robigo; this was an attempt to keep the wheat free from rust. The Christians followed generally the same route in honor of St. Mark.¹⁴

The prime example is the Christian feast of Christmas, which coincided with the pagan feast of the Birth of the Invincible Sun at the winter solstice. Perhaps this is an indication that the

paganism on Christian worship can be found in Fr. Jungmann's The Early Liturgy, Chapter 11.

¹⁴Jungmann, The Early Liturgy, p. 145.

early Christians were aware of the fact that violent opposition most often creates an adamant resistance.

A definite change of policy can be seen here regarding indigenization. Almost by definition Christianity is a proselytizing religion, even though its Jewish origin was quite the opposite. But until this time it was always understood that one became a Christian at a very great cost. Now there was a conscious attempt to adapt the faith to a culture in order that more people might be able to accept it. There was almost an attempt to 'sell' the Gospel.

There is a natural tendency to regard the Constantinian Age as a 'sell-out.' It is especially easy for twentieth century Christians to see the grave dangers involved in the marriage between culture and the Faith. In a sense the Church becomes fitted into a small slot in a great bureaucracy. It becomes either a small department in the machinery of secular government, or else it becomes a civic club or organization, hardly distinguishable from any well-meaning civic group. In many cases this adjustment is costly; the price is the spontaneity and spirit of the primitive Church. Worship becomes the half-hearted exercise of liturgical forms--the dutiful performance of the public rite.

But again, this oversimplifies the matter. We can scoff at the fourth century Church for taking on pagan forms, but at the

same time we must recognize the role of the Church in transforming a pagan Roman culture into a Christian society. With all of its obvious dangers this period laid the groundwork for the Christian culture of the Middle Ages, which, properly speaking, was the only truly Christian culture in Western history.

Fr. Jungmann explains this transformation in terms of the Incarnation:

The life of the Church can be regarded as a continuation of the Incarnation: new men, new nations, new cultures are constantly being taken up by the Church and built into the Mystical Body of Christ. These, in turn, determine to a certain extent the particular forms which the Church's life assumes. The process exemplifies the famous principle: Grace supposes nature; Grace does not destroy but perfects nature. Or to paraphrase the axiom: Liturgy supposes culture, which it does not destroy but rather perfects. Not a little of the cultural wealth of the Graeco-Roman world has been embodied in the Christian liturgy.¹⁵

It is easy to regard this as a more or less un-self-conscious process in the life of the Church, but at times it was probably more calculated than we might think. In 601 Pope Gregory sent a letter to Abbot Mellitus in England in which he offered a set of instructions to be given to Bishop Augustine. He writes:

When, therefore, Almighty God shall bring you to the most reverend Bishop Augustine, our brother, tell him what I have, upon mature deliberation on the affair of the English, determined upon, viz., that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 164--65.

water be made and sprinkled in the said temples, let altars be erected, and relics places. For if those temples are well-built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, may the more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed.... For there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface everything at once from their obdurate minds; because he who endeavors to ascend to the highest places, rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps.¹⁶

Gregory's advice might sound a bit unsophisticated in a situation where a highly-developed religion already exists. But from the pragmatic point of view, his advice to Augustine is most sound, especially in this particular situation. There is an honest and straight-forward attempt to convey the truth of the Christian Gospel to another culture through the use of indigenous worship forms.

Throughout the history of the Church one can see a process of adapting local customs and forms to the worship of the Church. Not only is the process seen on such a large scale as in Constantine's Rome, but also in a much less dramatic way it can be seen everywhere the Gospel has been preached and the Church has spread.

Even in the seemingly monolithic culture of Mediaeval

¹⁶J. A. Giles (ed.), The Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England also the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), pp. 55--6.

Europe we can see a great variety in usage. To a great extent the efforts of the Church in France since Charlemagne have been directed toward the end of a Gallican Church. Much of this effort has been expressed through political intrigue, but it also has been expressed in a sense of national or cultural worship. As well, the great variety of usages in England during the formative years of the Book of Common Prayer indicates the readiness of the Church to adapt her worship forms to local needs.

It is not necessary to discuss in detail the history of the worship of the Church to see that a process of indigenization has been present from the very beginning. At times this has been a self-conscious process, but most of the time it has not been.

In any case, there is precedent for the Church to be aware of this process, and that in part provides a basis for any missionary activity in this area.

Chapter III

The first two chapters of this paper were an attempt to come to terms with the basic questions concerning indigenous worship, and to try to explain it not only as an operative principle, but also as a given element in any situation where the true Word of God is preached. This final chapter will be an attempt to make a practical application of the principle and to see how it figures in foreign mission work today. It should be fairly obvious from the sources indicated that the missionary Church today is more conscious of the issue than it has been at any other time since Pope Gregory sent his wise advise to Bishop Augustine in England.

Interestingly enough, some of the most fascinating work has been done in the Roman Catholic Church. In September, 1959, the First International Study Week on Mission and Liturgy took place at Nijmegen and Uden, Holland. Included in the conference were thirty-seven missionary bishops as well as other missionary leaders. Their purpose was "to face courageously the liturgical problems of the missions and to search for solutions that had the support of tradition and authority."¹ Discussed at the conference were the

¹ Johannes Hofinger, S. J. (ed.), Liturgy and the Missions: The Nijmegen Papers (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1960), pp. 6--7.

need for liturgical reform, the practical problems concerning Sunday services where there is a shortage of ordained clergymen, Baptism and the other Sacraments, and adaptation of the Ritual to local situations.

Some of their conclusions were quite striking, to say the least. The conference first of all concluded that there should be a much greater use of the vernacular language in the Mass. Liturgical celebrations should be transferred by the bishops to places more suitable according to local custom. Rites and texts which are at variance with the way of thinking of local peoples should be suppressed, and there should be greater flexibility to the rubrics, so that the rite could be adapted to the local situation more easily. More local customs should be integrated into marriage and burial ceremonies. And it was also concluded that a greater effort should be made to translate the Bible into vernacular languages.

Again the theme of cultural transformation is carried out. Monsignor Alphonse Mulders, Director of the Missiological Institute in Nijmegen, writes: "The missionary world of today is like an active volcano seething with the counteraction between traditional structures and novel ideologies. It is my opinion that we Christians must enter into this volcano in order that one day it may produce no longer fire, but a new social order, a social order which

furnishes the best conditions for people to be able to reach Christ."²

The Most Reverend Jean van Cauwelaert, C. I. C. M., Vicar Apostolic of Inongo, Africa, presented a paper at the conference in which he concluded that adaptations of local customs to the liturgy must be done on more than a superficial basis. The following conditions must be supposed for any adaptation:

1. A proper knowledge of not only the exterior customs and rites of a people, but also of the deeper meaning from which they sprang.

2. A wise "feeling" for the things which in those ancient customs are still of some value under present circumstances. Also the direction the adaptation should take.

3. A profound knowledge of Christian tradition, in order to discern in the customs what is universal from what is practiced in a given civilization. Going back to the liturgical sources will be a great help in this work.³

Also discussed at the conference was the need for the incorporation of indigenous forms into the sacred music of the Church. As it has been pointed out, Western music is of an entirely different genre from African and Asian music. The usual procedure is either to take indigenous melodies and supply Western hymn lyrics, or to take Western music (often Victorian hymns) and supply indigenous lyrics. The result is usually dull or unintelligible to

²Ibid., p. 18.

³Ibid., p. 203.

the native Christians.⁴

The prime example of this procedure is in the Hymnal published by the East Asian Christian Conference. This is a Hymnal published in English (for international gatherings) and divided into two sections. The general section consists of hymns sung every Sunday morning in parishes from San Francisco to London. The second half is the Asian section, which consists of English texts set to 'Asian' melodies. The only problem is that the Asian melodies are harmonized into traditional Western Victorian or post-Victorian settings with intervals which must sound barbarian to the Asian who has a very keen sense of differentiation in tones.

Apparently the Roman Church has been more aware of the problem than other communions of the Church. There are a number of hymnals in circulation with some truly indigenous hymns, and as well a number of good native Masses have been composed. There are two native Masses in India--one in Hindu and one in Tamil. There are also Masses in Chinese and Indonesian.

The norms established for these indigenous Masses is that they must be composed of music which is good in its own right--profane music will not do. Also it must be a native composition. To be a true work of art it must come from within a culture. It is senseless for an outsider to come in and compose a native Mass,

⁴Ibid., pp. 228--29.

regardless of his familiarity with indigenous music forms.

The purpose of the Nijmegen conference was not to come to any final conclusions on the subject of worship in the missions, but rather to leave the subject open with room for free experimentation. In fact, another such conference was held in Louvain, Belgium, in August, 1963. Here there was a conservative tendency, an attempt to back down from some of the strong positions expressed at Nijmegen. It was felt, for example, that there should be a closer attempt to guard against 'baptizing' many native practices which should not be 'baptized.'

The discussions of the Roman Catholic conferences are especially exciting when they are considered in light of developments in the Roman Church. For during the Middle Ages the Roman Church began to develop an in-group policy concerning worship. Partly because of the Crusades and partly because of canonization which was growing rapidly in the twelfth century, worship began to be regarded as a Western European phenomenon; at least that was considered to be the norm. Then the Continental Reformation which came later had even more of a solidifying effect on the worship of the Church. So the ideas expressed at the conferences are truly a departure from traditional Roman Catholic policy of the past few centuries.

Interest in the problem has also been expressed in the

non-Roman communions. In 1962 the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission of the American Episcopal Church sponsored a similar conference at St. James Church in Wichita, Kansas. This conference was ecumenical, and also the subject of this conference was more inclusive than the Nijmegen and Louvain Conferences--it also concerned the mission of the Church to sub-cultures, such as the artistic and scientific cultures. But many of the same themes were discussed.

Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., in the keynote address to the conference, pointed out the 'mission compound' mentality which has so often characterized worship in foreign missions. The problem is that Christian converts became so involved in the life of the Christian community of the mission that they lost contact with their own cultures, and could no longer communicate with their own people. The final result was one of almost total irrelevance. He cited an example from the Philippines where a little Igorot girl appeared in church one Sunday morning stark naked except for a covering on her head.⁵ Shepherd insists that the 'missionary compound' mentality must be abandoned.

We can see by these and similar conferences that there is a new interest in indigenous Christian worship which before this time had been minimal. However, conferences do not always indicate

⁵Collier, Liturgy is Mission, p. 43.

the true state of the Church. The Church has always been much more willing to talk than to take action. But we can see that some efforts have been made; positive work has been done in this area. Perhaps it might be well to examine briefly a few instances where there has been a concern for indigenous Christian worship.

One area where progress can be seen is in Ghana. In 1954 it was decided that a survey should be conducted concerning the work of the three largest protestant bodies in Ghana--the Ghana Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The study was conducted during 1955--56, and covered the period from 1918--55. In 1957 Ghana became a self-governing state; therefore the years in question are especially significant. In fact, the rationale behind the study was largely political. In a personal letter to the author of the report one leader expressed his concern as follows:

Until recently "Christianity has been regarded in the country by most thoughtful Africans as a thing to be welcomed as the main hope and instrument of 'progress' in the life of the community." Now this is no longer so, but instead some Christians at least are "pinning their faith to Nationalism associated with rather vague hopes of social reform, but without any clear-cut ideology behind it." Furthermore, the Church is criticized for what is regarded as 'missionary imperialism' and contempt of African culture and traditions, particularly in the past." As a result of the above situations it was felt that there was "widespread confusion of thought among Christians as to the role which the Church has played and ought to play

in the future of the society.⁶

The objectives of the study were: "To determine the contribution of three Protestant Missionary agencies and the Churches which were brought into being, to the development of Ghana society; to endeavor to provide some insights for the new adherents of the Christian religion who are confused or who may have conflicts in their several loyalties to God, to their local social groups and to the developing self-governing territory; to provide data for the Churches as they seek to relate themselves more constructively to African life and to serve to bring about wholesome cultural changes."⁷

Naturally, the role which worship plays in this study is small since it concerns more non-liturgical communions, but still there was an effort at least to look at the situation. There has been growing concern with the question of worship there since 1941. At that time a commission of missionary leaders drew up a statement on the matter of indigenization. They concluded on one point that one meaning of indigenization (or integration) is: "Having accepted Christ as He is and His saving revelation, to express Him and His way of life, thought and worship, in terms that are living and full of meaning to African people."⁸

⁶Robert T. Parsons, The Churches and Ghana Society, 1918--55 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), p. xiv.

⁷Ibid., p. xiii.

⁸Ibid., p. 83.

However, a study group which met later concluded that: "We should not aim at Africanizing Christianity but rather Christianizing Africa. There is practically nothing in the African form of worship that can be taken over by the Christian form of worship."⁹

According to Parsons, however, the Church in Ghana has not been overly-adamant about preserving the westernness of Christianity. Indigenous customs have been tolerated so long as there is no great moral conflict with the Church's teaching. The result of this has been that two cultural systems--African and Christian--have each undergone changes during the period in review. Apparently each culture has influenced the other. Some local Churches have varied their rites somewhat, and Christian elements have been woven into certain African practices. From certain quarters there have been complaints that the Church needs to be more concerned about participating in the local ceremonies around marriage, death, birth, etc. From an Anglican point of view that would mean a concern with the indigenization of occasional offices. But, when all is said and done, there has been somewhat of a natural indigenization process going on in Ghana, and this is the way it should be.

It can also be noted that there are growing trends toward indigenization of worship on the Asian scene as well. Shepherd points out a few of these in an article in the Episcopal Overseas

⁹Ibid., p. 83.

Mission Review.¹⁰ It is interesting that the Asian Churches are less self-conscious about being 'Asian' than the African are concerned about keeping their cultural identity.

Shepherd discusses the Japanese, Chinese, and Philippine scenes. The first Japanese Prayer Book was drawn up in 1895, and it was essentially a conflation of the English and American Prayer Books. However, a revision came out in 1953. It is interesting that the major concern was with the structure of the Liturgy itself, and not with its outward forms. It is also interesting that there are many similarities with the changes suggested by the Standing Liturgical Commission of the American Episcopal Church; although the work was done independently.

Much of the devotional material has been moved out of the liturgy to a "preparation service" which is to come before, and which is based primarily upon the Decalogue. That is, it is primarily a penitential preparation. Also the Gloria in excelsis is moved to the primitive position after the Kyrie, and there is a restoration of the Fraction and Peace after the Lord's Prayer.

In Japan there seems to be little interest in adapting worship to native cultural patterns as in China and India. Worship is thoroughly Western. But in this case it is wise to look

¹⁰Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., "Liturgical Trends in the Asian Churches," Episcopal Overseas Mission Review, II (Michaelmas, 1956), pp. 41--45.

at the cultural situation outside the Church. More than in any other Asian country there is a self-conscious attempt in Japan to become Western. The popularity of Coca-Cola and American baseball are as indicative of this trend as are Western forms of worship.

Undoubtedly indigenous worship is less an issue in Asia than in Africa, for Eastern religions have always tended to be more ascetical and contemplative. There is naturally more of a concern with the content of the Faith than with its outward expressions in worship. This is probably not so true in the Philippine situation where worship is warm and fervent. In fact, the Catholic practice established there by the early Christian missionaries has always had a very warm reception.

But this points up a new factor which must now be considered in any discussion of an indigenous liturgy, or for that matter any other missionary activity of the Church. That factor is the global view which mid-twentieth century man has been forced to take seriously. It is becoming more and more difficult to speak of China, or Japan, or the Congo, or any other non-Western nation as an entity totally separated from the West.

We would do well not to ignore the interchange which has always taken place among cultures. Even during the 'darkest' periods trade routes have been open, and there has been an exchange of ideas as well as an exchange of goods. But it is fair to say that

world cultures today are more inter-related than they have ever been in the past. The day when the European or North American scene could be viewed without at the same time viewing the rest of the world is past. What happens in London and New York must be considered in relation to what happens in Africa or Southeast Asia.

That factor above all points out the folly of rejecting all that has been handed down in Christian worship during the past two thousand years. Consideration of indigenous worship forms does not necessarily call for an automatic rejection of all elements which have a different cultural background. Part of the richness of Christian worship is due to the fact that so many cultures--Eastern and Western--have contributed to it. It is highly likely in a particular situation that liturgical forms from another cultural background would be more appropriate than the local ones. It is fair to say that the worship of the Western Church reflects fairly well the culture out of which it arose. But, on the other hand, if one examines the worship of the Western Church very closely, one will find few elements which are distinctively Western.

Not only the universal nature of the Christian Gospel, but also the universal view of the emerging world culture demands that the Church take seriously the diverse character of her worship. In the final analysis, this might prove that we are a bit presumptuous when we speak of an indigenous African worship, or an indigenous

Chinese worship, etc. That simplifies the problem a bit too much. In the end, no form of worship is going to be entirely peculiar to any one particular area.

Concerning the work that is now being done in the area of indigenous Christian worship, one might say that there is more interest now than there has been formerly, but it is still scattered and not really too deep anywhere. In some regions, such as in Ghana, there has been rather a slow, natural indigenous process taking place. In other areas little change can be noted. John V. Taylor's observations on Africa are fairly indicative of what is taking place in other mission areas. He notes that there has been some indigenization of the outward forms of Christianity. Indigenous music is winning respect in some places. African artists have been able to participate to an extent in the decoration of African Church buildings. And drama and dancing have made a tentative appearance in the communication of the Gospel in a few places.

Yet he also notes that the enthusiasts are non-Africans for the most part. The African clergy are a bit conservative themselves, but the problem is larger than that. "The real reason is that the white 'indigenizers' are too superficial, and Africans know it. How many of the missionaries and teachers who have fun with African hymns and paintings recognize that a truly African worship is

going to seem queer and distasteful to European Christians? How many have any conception of the profundity of the difference between the Western and the African world-view, or, if they realized it, could accept the validity of the African? The hesitancy of many Africans to share our enthusiasm for indigenization stems from their unspoken question: Do they know what they are asking for?"¹¹

Up to this point, this paper has been concerned primarily with making a case for indigenous Christian worship in mission Churches. In all fairness perhaps at this time some of the problems involved should be pointed out.

In the first place, as it has already been suggested earlier, any indigenization process must be natural--there must be nothing artificial about it. And one culture cannot speak for another culture. That means that when indigenous worship forms are created, they must be a local creation. And worship is not really a democratic concern. It expresses the innermost piety of the people, but its forms of expression are dependent upon individual genius. It is difficult to imagine the Book of Common Prayer, for example, without a Thomas Cranmer.

¹¹John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision (Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 23-4.

The same holds true for the situations with which the Church is presently concerned. Worship involves sounds, smells, sights, colors, etc., but Christian worship involves a rite as well. The spoken word is a necessary part of Christian worship because basically there is a story to be told. Christian worship is the expression of an action of God which was effected at a point in history, and which is equally meaningful to the present age. The telling of this continuing event demands a sense of history, and a literary acumen to express it. And whereas many areas which the Church is evangelizing have a long literary tradition, many other areas do not. So perhaps the Church will simply have to be content to wait for such literary genius to arise.

A second problem is that of communication. Before it is possible to have indigenous worship the Christian Faith itself must be communicated. And the first difficulty is that of language. In the words of Hendrik Kraemer: "We all know that language is the chief, though by no means the sole, instrument of communication between men, whether these attempts at communication are successes or failures. We do not all know and sufficiently realize the high and mysterious place which language has in human life."¹²

In a sense, this is on the other side of the coin from the

¹²Hendrik Kraemer, The Communication of the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 62.

need for local literary genius, but the problem goes deeper than that. The Roman Catholic Church has often been criticized for saying Latin Masses in mission Churches, but those critics do not take seriously the problems which are involved in translating the Mass into a native tongue. It is extremely difficult to translate the sacrificial language of the Mass into terms which will be intelligible, or which will not convey a totally wrong meaning.

Every time a translator chooses a word he will be incorporating a new meaning into the liturgy, for every word which is available to him already has meanings attached to it which are derived from another religious milieu. This problem is especially formidable to Western man because it is probably safe to say that the people whom he is evangelizing are much more 'religious' than he is. Western man speaks a more secular (religiously neutral) language than most of the people of the world. So even when there is local genius, language is still going to be an extremely difficult problem.

Communication, however, is not limited to language. Western protestantism has often assumed this. In Kraemer's words: "The extravagant and nearly exclusive stress on verbal communication, on preaching and sermonizing, in the world of the Churches, which issued from the Reformation, is a degeneration or distortion of the Reformer's rediscovery of the prophetic character and quality of the

Word of God. This stress has closed the eyes of the Church to the manifold means of communication which we find in the Bible, which in contradiction to our Western world is not confined to, or imprisoned in, a 'verbal culture.'¹³

Kraemer further points out that there is an urgent need to recover symbolism. "Everywhere at present, in the various forms of art, in philosophy, in science, in religion, the significance of symbolism as a means of expression and communication is rediscovered. Symbols are material things or representations that point beyond themselves to a world of transcendental values and realities. ...part of the difficulty of communication of the gospel in our day is the unawareness of the Church of the fact that the Christian message is highly charged with symbolic connotations, and the inability of the world by the cultural situation to apprehend it."¹⁴

But here again we must be honest and admit that the translation of symbols from one culture into another is a formidable task. Anyone who has ever tried to translate the Scriptures into another language knows that this is all too obvious. In the first place, there are great linguistic diversities. It is extremely difficult to translate into a language where certain forms, such as the passive voice, do not exist. But the problem is also one of symbolic language, and one must admit that the language of the

¹³Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 77.

Bible is highly symbolic.

Eugene Nida cites some examples of these difficulties with symbolic language. For example, we speak of the emotional focus of the personality as the 'heart.' To the Chujes of Guatemala this emotional focus is the 'abdomen,' to the Marshallese it is the 'throat,' to the Totonacs of Mexico it is the 'spleen.' In a number of African languages the expression to be used is 'liver.' Thus, in translating John 14. 1: "Let not your hearts be troubled," the verse must be rendered: "Let not your liver be troubled," etc. Furthermore, corresponding symbols in two languages have different functions. For example, in some areas of the Philippines to move the head from side to side means 'yes' instead of 'no.'¹⁵

These, however, are only minor examples. Many times, such as here, appropriate alternatives can be found in the native language, and it is rather a simple matter of substitution. It is an entirely different matter when it comes to symbols of time and history. Christian worship bears witness to God's revelation in history. At a time and in a place God came to men. Furthermore, the Christian looks forward to an end or a Consummation of this age when the historical process will come to an end. Practically all Christian Eucharistic rites have to some degree this eschatological element. Christian worship, furthermore, bears witness

¹⁵Nida, Message and Mission, pp. 190--91.

to the fact that God is actively involved in the historical realm of man. Much of the Christian cult presupposes this fact.

How, then, does one convey this idea to an Indian who holds a cyclical view of history as opposed to a linear view? How does one convey the idea of sacred time to people who have total contempt for time and this world? This is an extremely difficult task, and one wonders if it is even possible to have indigenous worship where there are such obstacles.

Because of the great diversity among cultures, a risk is always involved when there is a conscious attempt toward indigenous Christian worship. The first chapter of this paper was concerned in part with the problem of distinguishing between indigenization and syncretism. It must be admitted that in the final analysis an indistinct line still exists. Norman Horner, in a discussion of Roman Catholic and protestant missionary strategy expresses the danger succinctly: "There can be no doubt that liturgy and ceremony run the danger of becoming a Christian veneer over heathen beliefs and practices in the minds of uninformed believers.... It takes little imagination to suppose that the tremendous popularity of prayers for the dead may merely substitute for ancestor veneration in Asia; or that medallions and crosses worn on the person may merely replace fetishes among animistic peoples; or that enthusiastic participation in much of Roman

Catholic pageantry may be subconsciously related to the seasonal festivities of tribal religion."¹⁶

This statement may be somewhat hyper-critical. It is more a criticism against the strong religious impulses of certain peoples than a criticism of practices completely contradictory to Christianity. For example, one cannot totally denounce practices such as ancestor veneration. To denounce all other religious practices as abominable is somehow to limit God's activity outside the Christian community. Nevertheless, Horner points out the fact that there is always a risk of total misunderstanding when Christian worship is localized. However, one might also add that that danger exists whether worship is indigenous or foreign. In fact, there may be a grave danger in using Western forms which can be misconstrued entirely.

Perhaps it might be charged that the Christian Church is too much afraid of syncretism. The word has been so scorned that it is almost anathema. John Taylor writes that Christian leaders should not be too anxious about the residuum of paganism within the Church. "If, as we shall see, an honest meeting between Christianity and the African world-view may be creative on the frontiers of the Church, it may be even more creative within the body of the Church

¹⁶Norman A. Horner, Cross and Crucifix in Mission (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 30--31.

itself. For de facto it is precisely at that point of encounter and contrast and choice that the Church will get its own authentic insights into the Word. It is at the danger point, the point of interchange and temptation, that a true African theology will be born, not out of syncretism but out of understanding."¹⁷

Nevertheless, the concern is one of a great many people, and it must be taken into account. And it is a valid concern. But it is true that the Church has too often had a closed mind regarding the truth, precisely because it has tried jealously to guard the truth. And this is to deny the fact that ultimately the Word of God is communicated to people through the Holy Spirit. Had the spread of the Gospel depended solely upon man's meager efforts, it is doubtful that the Church ever would have extended very far beyond Palestine.

¹⁷Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 42.

Conclusion

This paper has been concerned primarily with a principle--indigenization. This is a term which at the present time is in vogue in missionary circles. Like all terms which are in vogue, various meanings are attached to it by different people, and it acquires emotional overtones. It has also assumed the nature of a battle-cry. Not to be indigenous, then, becomes synonymous with not to be in vogue. Also, like most terms of this sort, it will become over-used, and it will be necessary to replace it with other words--'identification,' 'integration,' there are many possibilities.

But for the present time it is appropriate to use this term, for it helps to convey the meaning of the Incarnation. At a time and in a place God came to men--not just to a chosen nation, but to all men everywhere and at all times. This truth must be expressed in many ways, but particularly it must be expressed in the worship of the Church.

An effort has been made to show that this principle cannot be reduced to a simple formula or method. It is an inherent principle in any situation where the Holy Spirit is at work, and most often 'indigenization' is the act of being open to that inherent principle and to be creative with it. In some areas the Church has been creative with it, but in too many areas it has not been so.

Yet the missionary Church does not have to be passive about the matter. We can be assured that the Holy Spirit is at work, but we must also assume our responsibility as a people commissioned to do a task. There are far too many opportunities for experimentation for the missionary Church to sit idly by. There are opportunities to experiment in the areas of music, art, architecture, etc. Every culture expresses itself artistically, and it should be blatantly obvious that Western civilization does not have a monopoly on art forms. Many cultures can probably use their native art forms to express the Christian message better than we have been able to do with our own forms.

There is a need for more anthropological and sociological study on the part of the missionary Church to understand other cultures, but it goes without saying that indigenous worship cannot be created from the outside. This expression must be self-expression. The Church's role, therefore, is to encourage local experimentation in this area. In too many cases the Church actually forbids such experimentation.

It has been pointed out that any such experimentation must be carried on responsibly. While it is possible to be overly-conservative, there is also a danger of being too loose. On the question of the Eucharistic liturgy, for example, there has developed a certain universal shape common to all liturgies--~~Eastern~~ and

Western. The main concern, therefore, is not so much with rite as with ceremony. This means that interest should be limited neither to the missionaries nor to the indigenous leaders.

Finally, the rationale behind the encouragement of indigenous worship forms in Christian missions is not entirely theological. There are more practical or pragmatic reasons as well--namely that with the new nationalism there is an urgent need for the Church to be indigenous. This is not to say that the Church should become nationalistic. It is a very ancient practice for the state to use religion for ulterior motives, and in this respect the Christian Church should always stand above culture. But if the Church is too closely identified with Western white culture, there is a grave danger that it will be cast aside in those areas of the world where there is a new nationalism emerging in opposition to European and North American colonialism. In all honesty, it is to be expected.

Unfortunately, the Church has too often been regarded as a means to education, particularly in Africa. When this has been attained, then why not cast it aside? It is obviously a foreign religion; why not cast it aside when it has served its useful function? If this occurs, it is more a pronouncement of judgment against the Church than against the people whom she is evangelizing.

There is a sense of urgency here, and that urgency is expressed very well by the African who cries:

...My God, my God, but why should I tear out my
Shrieking pagan senses?
I cannot sing your anthem nor dance it without swing,
Sometimes a cloud, a butterfly, or a few drops of rain
are on the window of my boredom.
She drives me incessantly through the space of time.
My black blood pursues me into the solitary heart of
night. (Leopold Sedar Senghar, Chants pour Nkett,
trans. Sangodore Akanji)¹⁸

¹⁸Taylor, Primal Vision, p. 21.

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